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A MEMORIAL

OF

PUBLIC SERVICE,

1879-88.

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Charleston, S.C. Committee for memorial
of W. A. Courtenay

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Printed for the Committee of Arrangements,
By Lucas, Richardson & Co.,
Charleston, S. C. 1889.

THIS EDITION OF THE PROCEEDINGS,

UPON THE OCCASION OF THE UNVEILING, THIS CIVIC MEMORIAL,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE

Rev. CHARLES S. VEDDER, D. D.,

AS AN EXPRESSION

OF THE GRATEFUL APPRECIATION OF THE COMMITTEE OF CITIZENS,

IN CHARGE OF THE CEREMONIES,

FOR HIS FELICITOUS ADDRESS IN PRESENTING THE BUST.

December 19th, 1888.

In Everlasting Marble.

A Grateful People's Tribute to an Honored Servant—The Courtenay Memorial Bust Unveiled at the City Hall, on the First Anniversary of his Retirement from the Mayor's Office—Dr. Porter's Impressive Prayer—Dr. Vedder's Eloquent Presentation Address—Valentine's Chaste and Elegant Art Work.

THE Courtenay Memorial Bust, the tribute of hundreds of citizens of Charleston to their honored ex-Mayor, was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies in the City Hall last night, in the presence of a large and appreciative audience.

One year ago yesterday Hon. Wm. A. Courtenay retired from the office of Mayor which he had filled for eight years. The occasion was doubly interesting, inasmuch as it commemorated this anniversary. Upon his retirement there was a general expression of public opinion that his long and faithful service to the city should be recognized in some appropriate way. An impromptu meeting was held in December, 1887, at the Carolina Savings Bank, and after a full interchange of views, it was thought best that the sentiments of the

people should be fixed in imperishable marble, and the bust which now adorns the Mayor's office—the office in which Captain Courtenay labored, will speak to future generations, the admiration and respect of the citizens of Charleston for him.

The following gentlemen constituted the committee which had charge of the subscription lists, the preparation of the bust, and the invitations to the ceremony: Messrs—

GEO. W. WILLIAMS. JOHN S. RIGGS.
A. TOOMER PORTER, D. D. A. JOHNSON.
A. C. KAUFMAN.

Long before the hour appointed the guests began to arrive, and soon the Council Chamber was thronged with ladies and gentlemen, among whom were many of the most prominent citizens of Charleston, representing the professional, commercial, industrial and educational life of Charleston.

The Mayor, and a very full attendance of the Aldermen of the city, as also, the officials of the City Government and many members of the various Boards of Commissioners of Public Institutions were also present.

As the historic bells in St. Michael's tower chimed 7 o'clock, the wide folding-doors between the Mayor's office and the Council Chamber were thrown open, and Mr. George W. Williams, chairman of the committee, stepped forward and introduced Rev. A. Toomer Porter, D. D., who was to open the ceremonies with prayer.

Dr. Porter's Prayer.

Having raised his hand toward heaven, Dr. Porter said:

Almighty God, from whom all good things proceed, we ask Thy aid to all who are in authority everywhere, that they may regard themselves to be Thy servants, and to do Thy will. We thank Thee for such of those who are chosen to govern who endeavor to use their position not for selfish ends, but for the general weal. We ask Thy favor and approval of the purpose which has brought us together, and pray that this Memorial of Public Service may be an incentive to others to merit so marked a testimonial from their contemporaries. We commend Thy servant, and all our loved city to Thy love and care, and ask Thy continued blessing on us all for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Dr. Porter's prayer finished, Katie Buhler, a bright, pretty little girl from the Orphan House, ten years old, who had been standing beside the long curtain which covered the bust, drew the cord, and slowly the fair proportions of the marble came into view. A murmur of surprise and satisfaction rose from the crowd when they saw the features of the ex-Mayor in chiseled marble standing out in bold relief from the wall behind it.

Dr. Vedder's Address.

Mr. Williams again stepped forward and introduced Rev. C. S. Vedder, D. D., who spoke as follows:

Mr. Mayor: It is a peculiar privilege to be associated, even in the humblest way, with an occasion so significant and auspicious as this, and I respond with alacrity to the request of the Committee of Citizens, to represent them in the ceremony which it contemplates. They have kindly said that they expect and desire but a very few words—doubtless because they know that the words must be either very few or very many, and they are willing rather to risk that they should be inadequate than unending. The embarrassment of the occasion is the fruitfulness of its suggestions—the difficulty of deciding where to begin, what line of detail to pursue, and how to end. That embarrassment, however, by its very greatness, suggests the only relief from itself—repression of all attempt to meet it. There is no need in this presence—City and State, to recite the reasons for the present assemblage, and the impressive office which it is to discharge. It would reflect upon the occasion to imply that it needed to be explained. Nothing, then, remains for me but the suggestion, and not the indulgence, of thoughts which it prompts.

It is always a noteworthy event when a people testify, in some enduring and seemly manner, their appreciation of signal faithfulness in the discharge of official trust. Their recognition of eminent service is only less honorable to them than to him whom they seek to honor. It reveals such an estimate of worth as argues affinity with it. It has, moreover, its incentive and inspiration for

all others in public station to rise to the height of their opportunity and duty

But it is almost the rule of the abiding recognition of eminent service that it comes too late to achieve its best results. It delays beyond the time which immediately links the acknowledgment with the fact acknowledged. Often, indeed, the testimonial tarries until he whom it would recognize has passed beyond the possibility and need of earthly recognition. The reason of this is obvious. We are almost never just to cotemporaries. We need to get far from them before we can measure their true proportions. Not unfrequently we must wait until partisanships and personal feelings shall sink to their native insignificance, as seen over vistas of distance, or, indeed, over sleeping dust. An admired Roman poet found this to be the fact of his era, as it is of ours and all others. His words, freely translated and slightly changed, read:

> "He that excels the achievement of his days.
> Is apt to blind beholders with his blaze;
> But when he's gone, and quite extinct the fire,
> The man they knew, and prized not, they admire."

But it is the rare felicity of this occasion, that it purposes and provides an imperishable memorial of one who has but now laid down the heavy burden of office—one who is still with us, to hear the grateful "well-done" of the city which he served so long and well, with such energy and enthusiasm, such acceptance and assiduity; one who has not escaped, as he never shrank from, the antagonism inevitable before great force of character and unconquerable will, in the discharge of public duty, and in overriding traditional usages, which seemed to stand in the way of progress; one whose

place in estimation has not been gained by compliance or compromise of views, and who, through times more critical than even Charleston ever knew before, has sought, unslumberingly and unyieldingly, its highest welfare.

It was Cato—was it not?—who, when asked why his statue was not carried in a public procession, replied: "I had rather that men should ask why it was not, than why it was thus carried." If this monumental marble, or something akin to it, had not been erected here, there are very many who would have asked why it was not—none will ever wonder and inquire why it was!

The tablet to Sir Christopher Wren, in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, bears the well-known inscription: "*Si monumentum requiris? Circumspice.*" That stately pile is the grandest memorial to its builder. The testimonial to our distinguished fellow-citizen, here unveiled, has not been offered because he needed it. If you would see his truest and best monument, look around, upon every part of our city, and every department of our municipal life. No, he does not need the tribute, but we need to render it, and when those who come after us shall ask to see the lineaments so familiar to us, this speaking marble will afford the opportunity. To your care, then, Mr. Mayor, as the representative of this city, it is committed, that, in this building, itself, in the perfection of its appointments, a monument to him: in this official room, the scene of his labors, and in this chamber, which his own efforts and means have so largely adorned and enriched, it may take its place among the memorials of those whom Charleston will always remember with gratitude, and enshrine in honor.

Mayor Bryan Receives the Bust.

Hon. George D. Bryan, on behalf of the city as its Mayor, received the bust, with the following remarks:

"On behalf of the City Council of Charleston, it gives me great pleasure to accept into the custody of the city the bust of ex-Mayor Courtenay, presented by you in the name of a number of our fellow-citizens."

After Mayor Bryan had received the memorial, Mr. John S. Riggs, of the Committee of Arrangements, stepped forward and extended a pleasant invitation to the crowded audience to make a closer inspection of the artist's excelling work, by passing through the Mayor's room and this was done; the bust standing in a niche in the wall of the Mayor's office, where it will rest, long after those who raised it are as cold as the stone from which it was chiseled.

This beautiful work of art, stands on a pedestal of white marble, designed and executed by Mr. Reynolds, on King Street, and bears following brief inscription:

WILLIAM ASHMEAD COURTENAY.

MAYOR OF CHARLESTON, 1879–1887.

AS CHIEF MAGISTRATE
HE ADMINISTERED THE GOVERNMENT
WITH FIRMNESS, IMPARTIALITY AND SUCCESS,
EVEN AMID THE DISASTERS OF CYCLONE AND EARTHQUAKE,
SIGNALLY ILLUSTRATING THE SAFE MAXIM, THAT
"PUBLIC OFFICE IS A PUBLIC TRUST."

THIS MEMORIAL ERECTED BY HIS GRATEFUL FELLOW CITIZENS
DECEMBER 19TH, 1888.

Mr. Valentine's Triumph of Art.

The bust is in the classic style. It is a noble piece of sculpture. Its faithful likeness and strong effect immediately absorb the attention. The expression is grave and thoughtful, full of the wonted dignity of the Chief Magistrate, and the pleasant seriousness of a large mind and heart.

The civic ruler is the embodied conception, and the artist has with consummate skill following this ideal, achieved another marked success in his public statues. In all its elements of power, in its life, its firmness, and its energy, we doubt if Mr. Valentine was ever more successful.

This memorial is the third from this renowned sculptor that now adorns our City Hall. Hayne, Memminger, and now Courtenay, are rich treasures of his great gift. And it is to us a grateful thought that this Southern genius who has already wrought with so much of feeling and consecration of his art, the statues of Lee, Breckenridge and Jackson, should for us and for our children have chiseled the form and lineaments of the men our city has delighted to honor.

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